

Public Perceptions/Acceptance Working Group
Blue Ribbon Water Panel
Draft White Paper Analysis
August 26, 2010

Issue #5

The need to create and expand public confidence that reclaimed water is safe for reuse through an understanding of how the water is treated and the types of potential uses for reclaimed water AND The need to build a constituency for increased use and acceptance of reclaimed and recycled waters for beneficial purposes through education, outreach and other strategies

Describe the existing situation or issue

High on the list of reasons that reclaimed water is not used more frequently is the public's distrust of the safety of the water, whether for potable or nonpotable purposes. This strongly expressed public distrust has created a political atmosphere in which it is often difficult for communities and water providers to initiate potable or nonpotable reuse programs.

Describe associated impediments to increased reuse

The lack of public support for reuse programs manifests itself in many ways ranging from the inability of candidates supporting reuse to get elected or re-elected, lack of political support for rate increases to fund reuse programs, and lack of voter support to approve bonds to finance reuse programs.

Describe the possible solutions (e.g. policy/rule/legislation or guidance) that could be applied to remove impediments

- * Create and expand public confidence that reclaimed water is safe
- * Build a constituency for increased use and acceptance of reclaimed and recycled water for beneficial purposes

Provide the recommendations

- * Develop an understanding of how the water is treated
 - Use focus groups, professional public relations firms, and subject matter experts to provide information and outreach
- * Demonstrate potential uses for reclaimed water to the public
 - Use focus groups, professional public relations firms, and subject matter experts to provide information and outreach

- * Require jurisdictions having a wastewater treatment plant within its boundaries to submit to ADEQ and ADWR every other year an analysis of their ability to implement a reuse program within the next two years

Describe possible unintended consequences of the recommendations

None apparent at this time

Describe the benefits of the recommendation

Implementation of the above recommendations would, over time, reduce the public resistance to reuse, making it easier for policy makers and water providers to implement new programs.

Describe how the policy/rule/legislation or guidance could be administered (state, county, local, etc.)

While statewide program might be useful, particularly for ensuring the consistency of information, local programs are more likely to have a greater impact because of their ability to address specific local concerns personally.

Describe the associated cost / benefit of implementation, possible funding sources, and estimated cost to the end user

Effective public information programs can be expensive and time consuming. In times of shrinking budgets, there is little incentive to undertake such programs unless there is either a legislative mandate to do so or the benefits-ability to implement a reuse program with public support - are perceived to outweigh the upfront costs of a public information program.